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CITIES WITHOUT SPRAWL: A WAY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

**44th World Congress of the International Society of City and Regional Planners,
Dalian, 19 – 23 September 2008, jointly organized with the Urban Planning Society of
China (UPSC)**

The 44th ISOCARP congress took place in China which is a first in the history of the Society's annual congresses since its foundation in 1965. This year, the congress was co-organized and co-funded by the Urban Planning Society of China (UPSC), the City of Dalian, the Dalian Planning Bureau and the Dalian Urban Planning and Design Institute. It was under the special patronage of the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Development (MOHURD). The Vice Minister, Dr. Qiu Baoxing was one of the four keynote speakers, and the Mayor of Dalian City, Dr. Xia Deren, represented the host city at the congress.

The congress was well attended by 260 professional planners - 190 international participants from all continents, and 70 Chinese colleagues. In addition, the ISOCARP congress (taking place at the Shangri-La Hotel) had two joint sessions with the UPSC congress which took place at the same time at the Xing Hai Expo Centre in Dalian. This setting provided a stimulating environment for the activities of the congress. The two joint sessions had equal numbers of excellent speakers from abroad and from China, with a very large audience and strong Chinese participation. This provided for most interesting insights into current planning issues in China in comparison with international ones.

The following points would outline the wide-ranging debates during the congress, centred 120 carefully selected papers and about 15 invited contributions, including the keynote speeches:

- "Cities without sprawl" - the complex subject matter was discussed by participants in a series of six thematic workshops spread over three days, as well as in several plenary sessions.
- Urban sprawl may be defined in the most general manner as unbalanced city growth where the physical extent is faster than the population growth; sprawl also implies land fragmentation and loss of fertile agricultural land at the periphery of growing cities; the densities in sprawling suburbs are notoriously low so that the provision of infrastructure becomes unnecessarily expensive, and public transport is unfeasible.
- In affluent countries, urban sprawl is associated with automobile dependency and over-proportional and environmentally damaging use of cars – a luxury that is simply not affordable in many poorer countries where other forms of urban sprawl occur nevertheless.
- Urban sprawl now is a world wide phenomenon although it originated from North America, but it must be distinguished from the massive urban growth which is taking place all over the world, especially in the developing countries.



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- With appropriate policies, China (and other countries alike) would have a chance to work against the trend of low-density and land-consuming city growth to achieve the much wanted more sustainable urban patterns.
- There are some truly encouraging projects of such environmentally friendly and public-transport oriented cities in China, and the host city Dalian seems to be setting a very good example in this respect.
- The workshop of the 24 international young planning professionals dealt with a central-city location near the Dalian port, coming up with interesting proposals for more sustainable coastal development.
- As usual, the congress proceedings will be published in an appropriate way; this year, there will be a carefully edited electronic book (a compact disk) to be available in early 2009.

The delegates unanimously agreed that the jointly organized ISOCARP congress was a very meaningful and successful event, especially because it has led to more intensive professional exchange among individuals and institutions in China and all over the world.

(H. Detlef Kammeier, General Rapporteur)